

July 13, 2018

The Honorable James N. Mattis
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 22202

Dear Secretary Mattis:

This letter is in reference to recent reports that the military is discharging immigrant reservists and recruits who enrolled under the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) program. As you know, this program recruited noncitizens to enlist who were deemed “vital to the national interest,” including those with desirable medical and language skills, to enter the military and afforded them a pathway to citizenship. It is concerning that the military would discharge these individuals, seemingly without explanation, and subject them to deportation.

Oftentimes, these recruits wait years before they are cleared for basic training due to enhanced security screenings. These long wait periods subject them to expired visas, leaving their futures in the balance. Some also come from countries where any prior association with the United States Armed Forces would place their lives in jeopardy. Therefore, I have the following questions:

1. How many individuals are currently enrolled under the MAVNI program?
2. How many individuals currently enrolled in MAVNI are also or have been Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients?
3. How many individuals have been discharged? In providing the number, please include a breakdown by military branch.
4. Why have these individuals been discharged?
5. Where are these discharges occurring?
6. What recourse do these recruits and reservists have?
7. How many current or former DACA recipients have been discharged?
8. How are you notifying these individuals of their discharge? Do you provide them a reason?
9. What assistance is the military providing for these individuals to adjust their immigration status?
10. Have any such individuals subject to discharge in the MAVNI program since been deported? If so, to what countries are they a citizen of and which countries have they been deported to?
11. What discharge codes are being assigned on their DD214 forms? Under what conditions would the discharge be considered honorable, and how many individuals have received an honorable discharge?
12. What benefits are discharged individuals entitled to?
13. What transition guidance have discharged individuals received?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. As a representative of Military City USA, home to Joint Base San Antonio, I look forward to your prompt response. If any specific questions are of a sensitive nature and would best be discussed in a classified setting, I ask you or a representative of the Department of Defense to arrange a briefing for me and other members of Congress.

Sincerely,

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress